

the nervus vagus and glossopharyngeus. The os petrosum is distinguished by a spheroid flat bulla ossea, which is quite different from that in some Mammals, being there the ossified cavum tympani, here a part of the vestibulum; it is very thin and transparent, so that the calcareous concrement may be seen. The upper part of the cranium is as broad as the os basilare is expanded; from the broad united ossa parietalia and frontalia suddenly projects a narrow long bone, situated between the nostrils, parallel with the ascendent processes of the intermaxillary bone, and nearly reaching the symphysis of the intermaxillary bones. This is formed by the frontalia anteriora; and there is in front a vestige of a suture, perhaps of formerly-separated nasal bones. The edge of the maxillary and intermaxillary bones is sharp; and the latter are provided with very long and narrow ascending processes. There are nine vertebræ, the second with hammer-like, the third and fourth with long cylindrical diapophyses; that of the sacral vertebra is moderately dilated, triangular, and flat, and joined with the ossa ilca by a much-developed cartilaginous symphysis. The scapula is not notched on the inner edge; the bones of the extremities are distinguished by their shortness and by the large size of their condyles. There is no processus xiphoideus.

The contents of the stomach consisted of a great many excessively small beetles, some lumps of earth, and small pieces of stick. I suppose that the animal catches those insects by stretching out the tongue, as some other animals do. In this action small particles of earth, &c. adhere to the tongue. The lumps of earth found were balled together only in the stomach, being too large to have passed the narrow cleft of the mouth\*.

## 2. A FEW REMARKS ON THE HABIT AND ECONOMY OF THE BROWN-CAPPED POMATORHINUS (P. RUFICEPS, HARTLAUB). BY G. KREFFT.

The range of this bird does not appear to be a very extensive one; it was first discovered in the Polygonium Flats bordering the Murray River and its backwaters; but on the Darling they were not found so plentiful. Their favourite haunts are clusters of dead box timbers, and scrubby flats studded with salt bush, &c.

This bird is remarkably shy, and so cunning, that in almost all cases it will evade pursuit by running into some scrubby bush, and hide there till the danger is over. Its power of flight is exceedingly moderate, and closely resembles that of the brown Tree-creeper.

\* M. Sallé, to whom science is indebted for the discovery of this strange animal, writes in a letter, "Je sais bien peu de choses sur le *Rhinophrynus dorsalis*; il vient des terres chaudes et tempérées de l'Etat de Vera Cruz; on le trouve dans la terre et assez profondément enfoncé, quelquefois à un pied ou deux; il paraît y vivre, il a des mouvements très lents et il est très mou, ce qui fait, que les indigènes le désignent dans des endroits sous le nom de *Sapo sin huesos* (Crapaud sans os); je ne sais pas comment il peut s'enterrer ni de quoi il se nourrit."

These birds are always found in flocks of from four or five to twenty and more. They keep a good look out; and as soon as they suspect danger, they will rise with a sharp whirring noise, and seek shelter among the foliage of another tree, or run at a quick pace along the ground. They are very restless, and keep constantly moving up and down the branches and in the shade of the foliage; so that it is very difficult to obtain a shot at them.

Different kinds of insects appear to be their principal food, as I have found the remains of grasshoppers, &c. in their stomach.

Their nests are very remarkable structures, and about 30 to 36 in. long by 2 feet in circumference; the entrance is at the top, and protected by overhanging sticks. The whole fabric is very strongly constructed of dry branches, and at first appearance would never be taken to be the work of such a small bird. The inside of the nest is very small, consisting of a tunnel of about 14 or 15 in. in depth by 3 or 4 in. in diameter. The roof-like sticks covering the entrance are a good protection against the depredations of the spotted *Dasyurus* and other enemies to the eggs and young brood, showing the deep sagacity of this singular bird.

Travelling along the banks of the Murray, and now and then cutting off a bend of the river by crossing through the scrubble, the traveller cannot help noticing a great many of these nests buried between the forked branches of *Eucalyptus dumosa*, or into the very crown of the Huon pine. Whenever I asked my native companions to which birds these nests might belong, they would tell me their native name for it, which is Tannekun, but which left me as wise as before, as no Brown-capped Pomatorhinus was to be met with. It was not until Mr. Blandowski had returned to Melbourne, leaving me in charge of the expedition, that I was informed by that gentleman that this bird was not described by Mr. Gould, urging me to procure every information about its habits and economy; but very soon after this a splendid life-like representation appeared in the Supplement to the 'Birds of Australia.'

*Measurements*:—Weight hardly 2 oz.; between wings 11"; length  $9\frac{1}{2}$ ".

It was not so easy as I thought, to procure the eggs; and for two days I was unsuccessful—not one nest of more than a score which were searched contained any eggs; but on the 20th of September an inhabited nest was found in the top of a pine tree, which contained five fresh eggs of a light greenish-blue colour, with a few very indistinctly marked darker spots, and divided in the middle by a band paler than any other part of the egg.

When the nest was first seen there were about ten or fifteen birds hopping about it, by which and by the size of the nest I should suppose that more than one female deposits her eggs in it. The eggs which the natives brought in after this were almost all set upon: at the same time they brought some young birds; and about a fortnight later I shot several young birds on the wing.